

Application Serial No.: 09/705,486

Attorney Docket No.: 72167.000166

REMARKS

Claims 68-103 are pending in this application. By this amendment, claims 1-67 are canceled and claims 68-103 are added. Reconsideration and allowance in view of the following remarks are respectfully requested.

No new matter has been added by this amendment. Support for the amendments to the claims may be found throughout the specification, drawings and originally filed claims. In particular, support may be found at page 2, lines 12-28; page 5, lines 22-26; page 6, lines 1-23; page 7, lines 25-26; page 8, lines 12-26; page 9, lines 2-27; page 10, lines 10-28; page 15, lines 5-21; page 16, lines 14-23; page 18, lines 12-28; page 21, lines 12-27; page 22, lines 1-9; page 23, lines 1-9; page 24, lines 14-24; page 25, lines 15-25; and page 26, lines 2-14, for example.

I. The Claims Define Patentable Subject Matter**A. The Rejection Based on Goodale**

In the Office Action, claims 1 - 7, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19 - 21, 25 - 29, 35 - 42, 47, 48, 50, 53 - 56 and 60 - 64 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale (US 5,125,075). It is respectfully submitted that Goodale fails to teach or suggest added claim 68.

With reference to claim 1, the Office Action asserts that Goodale teaches various aspects of the claimed invention. The Office Action asserts that Goodale teaches a method and a system for automating, the method comprising generating at least one electronic document, ("the send operation enables the user to transmit items to other users in the form of a memo, phone message, invitation or package", column 5, lines 21 - 23) and ("means for enabling a sender to establish a circulation list and associate the item to be circulated with the circulation list", column 1, line 68 - column 2, line 2), wherein a memo, a phone message invitation, package and a circulation list are electronic documents and establishing a list is generating a list;

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identifying entities in the approval process, ("the present invention provides electronic means for a user to ask a pertinent chain of command for approval and comments of a certain request", column 4, lines 33 - 35) and ("the route list therefore specifies an ordered list of originator selected recipients", column 4, lines 42 - 44), and ("a purchase order request from a project engineer may have to be approved through a pertinent chain of command", column 1, lines 13 - 15), wherein recipients are entities.

The Office Action further asserts that Goodale teaches automatically forwarding a notice requesting approval of the at least one electronic document to a successive one of the entities in the approval hierarchy upon approval of the at least one electronic document by a previous entity in the approval process, ("the present invention enables users to process a document or the like through desired recipients as opposed to merely distribute documents or copies thereof to desired recipients", column 4, lines 29 - 32) and ("after a recipient has received the route package and taken action, i.e. voted and/or commented on the request, he sends the route package to the next list recipient via e-mail", column 4, lines 46 - 49), wherein e-mail is an automatic process ("automated features are conventionally called applications and include for example electronic mail", column 4, lines 18 - 19), wherein automatically is defined in the applicant specification as providing automation to a manual process.

The Office Action reflects that Goodale does not teach a system specifically for project management, and that a general reason why it would be useful to apply the Goodale invention to a project management is that projects have numerous points in the time span of the project where approvals are needed. The Office Action concludes it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to apply the Goodale invention to project management because projects have many phases where approvals are necessary. The

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Office Action further reflects these approvals are also made by different entities based on the phase that the project is in and by how much money is being requested as needed for a specific phase.

In contrast to Goodale, claim 68 recites a computer implemented method for managing a project using a processing system, the method comprising establishing a database in the processing system, the processing system maintained by a project management entity; providing funding approval associated with the project, the funding approval being effected in association with a document collection associated with the project, the document collection maintained in the database; accessing the document collection in the database by a vendor; the vendor entering and submitting electronically information related to the project; and the vendor determining that approval for the project has been secured through access to the document collection.

In the Abstract, Goodale teaches a mail circulation device enables serial delivery of a unique, non-interchangeable route package containing mail items and a route list of desired recipients, to each listed recipient. The mail items of the route package are originals, as sent by the sender, throughout the circulation. The route list also specifies the type of action each recipient is allowed to take with respect to the route package. Goodale further describes votes of approval and comments of the mail items of the route package by each recipient are recorded in a data file which associates the mail items and route list.

In column 1, lines 64 - 68, Goodale teaches the Goodale invention discloses an electronic mail circulation device, especially one for obtaining comments and votes of approval from selected users of a digital data computer system. The mail circulation device provides means for enabling a sender to establish a circulation list and associate the item to be circulated with the circulation list.

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In column 5, lines 8-30, Goodale further teaches that an electronic mail circulation device embodying the Goodale invention is shown in FIGS. 1a and 1b. Goodale describes a user at terminal 21 is presented with a main menu 23, shown in detail in FIG. 2, of the operating computer system. From this menu the user is able to choose one of three listed categories of operation--View, Send, Other. The "view" operation enables the user to view items he has received by electronic mail in his mailbox, to view bulletin board messages publicly (visible by all users) posted by other users, and to view confirmations (return replies of requests he has previously sent). The steps of the former and latter as related to route packages are illustrated in FIG. 1b. The "send" operation enables the user to transmit items to other users in the form of a memo, phone message, invitation or package. The "other" operation enables the user to access control over Distribution Lists or Route Lists, to manage designated alerts, and to post a bulletin. Goodale notes that an outline of the steps involved in sending a route package and creating a route list is shown in FIG. 1a.

In column 4, lines 26-35, Goodale describes the Goodale invention is a subpart of the electronic mail application which enables users to send messages, documents, files, etc. to each other much like an internal manual mail service does; and that the Goodale invention enables users to process a document or the like through desired recipients as opposed to merely distribute documents or copies thereof to desired recipients. As described, the Goodale invention provides electronic means for a user to ask a pertinent chain of command for approval and comments of a certain request. The user prepares his request in the form of a route package and sends the route package by electronic mail serially from one user whose approval is sought to the next. The path along which the route package is sent is defined by a route list which is attached to the request when the route package is initially formed and sent by the originator.

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However, Goodale fails to teach or suggest the particular interrelationship of features as set forth in claim 68. In particular, claim 68 recites the funding approval being effected in association with a document collection associated with the project, the document collection maintained in the database; accessing the document collection in the database by a vendor; and the vendor entering and submitting electronically information related to the project.

Accordingly, claim 68 recites various features relating to a project, which is associated with a document collection. Features related to the project include the recited funding approval and the access by the vendor. Applicant respectfully submits that Goodale fails to teach or suggest such interrelationship of features.

Applicant respectfully submits that Goodale fails to teach or suggest the features of claim 68 for at least the reasons set forth above. Further, independent claims 98-103 are allowable at least for reasons similar to those discussed above with respect to claim 68.

Further, the various dependent claims recite patentable subject matter at least for their various dependencies on claim 68, as well as for the additional subject matter recited in such dependent claims.

For example, claim 88 recites wherein an approver returns the funding approval to a previous approver, the previous approver not being the requestor. Goodale fails to teach such features. Instead, for example, Goodale teaches in column 4, lines 54-64, the options specified by the route list include processing or voting options of each recipient. The processing/voting options state how each recipient may vote (approve, disapprove, abstain) on the request, and may further state the option of certain recipients to interrupt circulation of the request by returning the request to the originator for second consideration. In the latter case, after the route package is

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sent back to the originator via electronic mail, the originator has the option of continuing the circulation.

Withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §103 rejection based on Goodale is respectfully requested.

B. The Rejection Based on Goodale and Nelson

In the Office Action, claims 8 - 10, 18, 43 - 45, 52, 57, 66 and 67 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale in view of Nelson (US 6,032,132). This rejection vis-à-vis added claims 68-103 is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action asserts that as per claims 8 and 43, Goodale teaches an approval process in a business hierarchy, and that Goodale does not teach where a document is a request for assistance that initiates the project. The Office Action reflects that Nelson teaches the management of a contract from start to finish, ("The processes performed in the contract management module are illustrated in the flow chart of FIG. 30. FIG. 31 shows a screen display 144 that may be used by a system information manager to manage contract term information. The Office Action asserts that this screen provides the facility to locate contract terms by account number BAN or OCN, wherein a contract initiates a project. The Office Action thereafter concludes that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to use the Goodale approval process to initiate a project by approving a contract because approving or signing contracts are a well known means of initiating a project, and that the Goodale approval process would make the approval of a contract by a plurality of parties faster and more efficient. Further, the Office Action proposes to combine the teachings of Goodale and Nelson with regard to approval by a plurality of parties, a commit to a vendor, operation in a Windows environment and on the Internet.

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However, Applicant submits that even if it were obvious to somehow combine the teachings of Goodale and Nelson, which it is not, the proposed combination of applied art would still fail to teach or suggest the features as recited in claim 68, and the other independent claims. Accordingly, it is submitted that Nelson fails to cure the deficiencies of Goodale as described above.

Withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §103 rejection based on Goodale and Nelson is respectfully requested.

C. The Rejection Based on Goodale and Mora

In the Office Action, claims 11, 14, 22, 23, 46, 49, 58 and 59 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale in view of Mora et al (US 6,161,113). This rejection vis-à-vis added claims 68-103 is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action asserts that Goodale teaches a system that permits a hierarchy of people to approve a document, but that Goodale does not specifically teach a bid. The Office Action asserts that Mora teaches a request for money that is justified by a budget, ("to request additional money for the project once the project has begun", column 12, lines 41 - 43) where ("the estimation process, WBS and schedule and budget", column 11, lines 35 - 40), wherein a bid is a request for money supported by a budget. The Office Action concludes that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill at the time the invention was made to enhance the Goodale approval process by permitting the system to perform the approval of a bid by a plurality of persons because this would allow the bidding process to move forward faster and in a more efficient environment. The Office Action further proposes to modify Goodale regarding changes or modifications to a specification or requirement, approval of a budget, and funding of a project

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However, Applicant submits that even if it were obvious to somehow combine the teachings of Goodale and Mora, which it is not, the proposed combination of applied art would still fail to teach or suggest the features as recited in claim 68, and the other independent claims. Accordingly, it is submitted that Mora fails to cure the deficiencies of Goodale as described above.

Withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §103 rejection based on Goodale and Mora is respectfully requested.

D. The Rejection Based on Goodale and Webber

In the Office Action, claims 16 and 51 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale in view of Webber Jr. (US 6,167,378). This rejection vis-à-vis added claims 68-103 is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action proposes to modify Goodale based on Webber's teaching of a digital signature. However, Applicant submits that even if it were obvious to somehow combine the teachings of Goodale and Webber, which it is not, the proposed combination of applied art would still fail to teach or suggest the features as recited in claim 68, and the other independent claims. Accordingly, it is submitted that Webber fails to cure the deficiencies of Goodale as described above.

Withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §103 rejection based on Goodale and Webber is respectfully requested.

E. The Rejection Based on Goodale and the Brock and Palmer Article

In the Office Action, claims 30 - 34 and 65 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale in view of "Accounting Principles and Applications by Brock & Palmer published in 1981. This rejection vis-à-vis added claims 68-103 is respectfully traversed.

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The Office Action asserts that Goodale does teach performing a closeout operation and partially closing out an operation when only a portion of the project has been completed. The Office Action proposes to cure this deficiency with the teachings of the Brock and Palmer Article. Specifically, the Office Action proposes that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate financial measures, calculation of payments and General Ledger closing entries because such measures are old and well known in the accounting art as means to convey to both the project manager and to the customer the degree to which the goals of the managed project are being met.

However, Applicant submits that even if it were obvious to somehow combine the teachings of Goodale and the Brock and Palmer Article, which it is not, the proposed combination of applied art would still fail to teach or suggest the features as recited in claim 68, and the other independent claims. Accordingly, it is submitted that the Brock and Palmer Article fails to cure the deficiencies of Goodale as described above.

Withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §103 rejection is respectfully requested.

F. The Rejection Based on Goodale, Mora and Nelson

In the Office Action, claim 24 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Goodale in view of Mora and in further view of Nelson. This rejection vis-à-vis added claims 68-103 is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action asserts that Goodale does not teach an approval process specific to a project budget, and proposes to cure such deficiency with the teachings of Mora. Applicant submits that such combination would fail to cure the deficiencies described above.

Further, the Office Action asserts that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill at the time the invention was made to enhance the Goodale and Mora approval processes by

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permitting the system to work in a Windows environment (based on the teachings of Nelson) because this would make the system easier to use and would allow the system to be used by a larger number of people. Applicant submits that such combination would also fail to cure the deficiencies described above.

Withdrawal of the 35 U.S.C. §103 rejection is respectfully requested.

II. CONCLUSION

For at least the reasons outlined above, Applicant respectfully asserts that the application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the claims are respectfully solicited.

For any fees due in connection with filing this Response the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the undersigned's Deposit Account No. 50-0206.

Should the Examiner believe anything further is desirable in order to place the application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned representative at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,
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